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Creole Speech Communities*

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1. Introduction

For the purpose of this discussion I shall use the term "community" in reference to any network of individuals who interact with one another on the basis of shared values. To the extent that those shared values relate directly to the allocation and utilization of linguistic codes, the universe of participants may be considered a speech community. Among the shared values of any speech community are a set of one or more different languages (or different varieties of the same language) which are spoken by significant numbers of persons or, for some other reason, are considered important features of the overall pattern of language use. In the Netherlands Antilles Islands of Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire, there are at least four such languages:

1) Papiamentu is the universal vernacular, the language that everyone speaks within the intimate interactional network of the local population, most of whom are native speakers.

2) Dutch has been the official language of Curaçao since 1634 when the Dutch wrested control of the island from the Spanish. Until recently, Dutch was the required language of parliamentary debate. It is now conducted in Papiamentu, however. Dutch continues to be the official medium of education (cf. Wood 1969), but classes are now given in the lower grades in Papiamentu on an experimental basis.

3) Spanish, the language of the original Conquistadores who controlled the islands from 1499 to 1634, continued to function as an important second language during the early years of Dutch rule and facilitated communication among a population which spoke a variety of mother-tongues: Portuguese, Dutch, the Arawakan language of the islands' pro-colombian inhabitants, and several different West African languages--the precise identities of which are not known. The spread of Spanish as a second language among African slaves, during the Dutch era appears to have been the starting point in the emergence of Papiamentu as a new Spanish-based creole (DeBose 1975). In modern times, Spanish is used by Papiamentu speakers mainly for communication with tourists and other visitors from nearby Venezuela and other Spanish-speaking areas of the Caribbean and is widely taught as a school subject.

4) English is widely used in tourism and commerce for communication with English-speakers who do not speak Papiamentu. It is a major school subject and the mother tongue of a colony of Americans in Aruba.

An indication of the importance of these four languages is an ad which appeared in a recent issue of the newspaper Amigoe di Curacao announcing an opening for a managerial position requiring "some experience in hotel business; between the age of 30 and 50 years; knowledge of English, Spanish, Dutch and Papiamentu." While many Antilleans may lack knowledge of one or another of these four languages, the desirability of knowing all four is probably a universally held value. When we speak of the speech community of the Curaçao island group, therefore, we are referring to the community of persons who share a set of values regarding the allocation of a set of linguistic codes, primarily Papiamentu, Dutch, Spanish, and English, within a particular pattern of language use.

2. Creole Studies and Language Typology

William A. Stewart (1968) has proposed a "sociolinguistic typology of national multilingualism" on the basis of which any situation of national multilingualism might be characterized as consisting of one or more distinct languages each of which is assigned to a particular typological category (e.g., creole, standard, artificial), and a particular functional label (e.g., official, literary, religious). Stewart's typological categories are determined by the presence or absence of four defining attributes:

1. Standardization, or the extent to which a codified set of written norms of acceptability are in force.
2. Autonomy, the criterion which distinguishes languages which are considered 'real' by members of the speech community from those which are considered 'dialects', 'corruption', 'bad' speech and so forth.
3. Historicity, the criterion by which languages thought to have evolved normally from some parent language like proto-Indo-European or proto-Bantu are distinguished from those which are created artifically or thought to have emerged rather recently from a contact situation resulting from conquest, trade or migration.
4. Vitality, the existence of a community of native speakers.

The typology realized on the basis of the above criteria is summarized in Figure 1:

Figure 1.

Attribute					
Standard	Autonomy	Historicity	Vitality	Type	Symbol
+	+	+	-	Classical	C
+	+	+	+	Standard	S
-	+	+	+	Vernacular	V
-	-	+	+	Dialect	D
-	-	-	+	Creole	K
-	-	-	-	Pidgin	P
+	+	-	-	Artificial	A

Having specified the inventory of language types in significant use within the nation in question, the description is completed by specifying the functional role of each language within the speech community (e.g., official {symbol o}), educational (e), literary (l), school subject (s), international (i), group (g), religious (r), and the relative number of persons who speak each language. Into class (I) Stewart places those languages which are used by 75% or more of the population. Class (II) includes languages spoken by at least 50% of the community. Class (III) includes languages used by at least 25%; Class (IV), at least 10% and Class (V), at least 5% of the total population. Into Class (VI) are placed those languages spoken by less than 5% but considered important for some other reasons such as use within the context of religious ritual.

To illustrate his typology, one of the examples Stewart gives is the language situation in the Curaçao island group of the Netherlands Antilles (Figure 2):

Figure 2.

Class	Language	Type and function
I	Papiamentu	K (d: H=Spanish)
IV	Dutch	So
	English	Sigs
V	Spanish	Sisl (d: L=Papiamentu)
VI	Hebrew	Cr
	Latin	Crs

The designation of Papiamentu as (d: H=Spanish) and of Spanish as (d: L=Papiamentu) is intended to capture a supposed diglossic relationship between the two languages. I think a more accurate description of the relationship between Papiamentu and Spanish is captured by designating the former a Spanish-based creole since deglossia implies that Papiamentu speakers address one another in Spanish for certain purposes for which Papiamentu is considered unsuited (Ferguson, 1959).

Stewart justifies his classification by pointing out that Spanish once functioned "as a full-fledged literacy alternate to Papiamentu." Today, however, Papiamentu speakers use only Papiamentu among themselves for both spoken and written purposes and within both formal and casual contexts.

The creolist is interested in the language situation in Curaçao for what it can tell him about the nature and origin of creoles. Papiamentu has traditionally been considered a Spanish-based creole. As such, one might reasonably expect that by studying Papiamentu it is possible to learn a great deal which is valid with respect to X-based creoles in general, and that by studying the Curaçao speech community one might discover certain sociolinguistic universals of creole speech communities. In order to safely engage in such generalizations, however, it must first be established that Papiamentu is indeed a Spanish-based

creole. This can be done by compiling evidence that Papiamentu meets the conditions of some agreed upon set of definitional criteria.

The traditional definition of a creole used by most linguists today is based on the notion that a creole is a pidgin or 'jargon' which has become the mother tongue of some group (Bloomfield 1933; Hall 1966). Alleyne (1971) has noted, however, that there is little direct evidence that Papiamentu or any of the other Atlantic creoles are 'nativized pidgins'. In the light of this observation we could join Alleyne in concluding that Papiamentu is not a creole. Before reaching such a radical conclusion, however, one might consider the alternative conclusion that a creole is not necessarily a 'nativized pidgin'.

One definition of a creole in which the 'nativized pidgin' criterion appears unnecessary could be based upon two binary features: Stewart's 'historicity' criterion which distinguishes pidgin, creole and artificial languages from all others, and a new feature, natural, which could distinguish P's and K's from A's. The only remaining difference between pidgins and creoles is based on the attribute of vitality. Figure 3, shows the typology which results from these distinctions:

Figure 3.

Attribute			
Natural	Historicity	Vitality	Type
+	-	+	Creole
+	-	-	Pidgin
-	-	-	Artificial

On the basis of these attributes it can be established that Papiamentu is a creole without evidence that it is a 'nativized pidgin'. By the same set of criteria Haitian Creole, Sranan, Crioulo and other traditional creoles are correctly classified. Certain other languages, traditionally considered pidgins, may also be correctly classified by this set of features (e.g., Chinese Pidgin, Nigerian Pidgin). There are other languages, however, traditionally considered pidgins or creoles which are not so classified according to Stewart's typology. This typology, it should be noted, is concerned only with the different languages found in a speech community and ignores basilectal, mesolectal, pidginized and other non-autonomous styles, registers or lects of the language in question. Jamaica Talk would not be considered a different language than English since there is no 'structural gap' (Stewart 1962) separating the creole basilect from Standard Jamaican English in the way that Papiamentu is separated from Spanish and Haitian Creole from French. Tai Boi, spoken in Viet Nam under the French, is often considered a pidgin (Reinecke 1971) but is most accurately described as a pidginized variety of French, or 'broken' French influenced by French foreigner talk. The so-called "working pidgins" used by Australian factory workers (Clyne 1975) would also be better described as 'broken' German or English to distinguish it from languages like Chinese Pidgin.

To include such entities as 'broken' X, foreigner talk and post-creole varieties into our typology it seems necessary to add a feature which distinguishes differences of language, characteristic of the relationship of pidgins and creoles to their lexical source, from differences of variety within a language, characteristic of 'broken' X, foreigner talk and post-creole continua. We may call this feature language.

To complete our typology we must add two dynamic features: pidginized and creolized on the basis of which 'broken' X, foreigner talk and post creole varieties may be distinguished. Pidginization may be viewed as a process which accepts normal X as input and produces 'broken' X as output. Creolization, on the other hand, may be thought of as accepting 'broken' X as input and producing a new X-based pidgin or creole as output.

Before attempting to illustrate the complete typology, a few terminological inconsistencies require our attention. It may have been noted above that according to Stewart's criteria the only difference between pidgins and creoles is that the latter have native speakers. Unless we wish to make such a distinction we might profitably use the term creole to refer to any X-based language, whether or not it has native speakers since either type is a product of creolization. Distinctions based on vitality could still be expressed as functional subtypes: creole mother tongue vs. creole lingua franca. The main consequence of such a decision is that we would have to get used to calling languages like Chinese Pidgin and Nigerian Pidgin creoles. We would be free, on the other hand, to use the terms pidgin and pidginized interchangeably, as many writers already do, with no fear of ambiguity. Reinecke's characterization of Tai Boi as a pidgin (1971) would be appropriate under such a convention as would be Hall's assertion (1966) that Italian foreigner talk used by tour guides is a pidgin. In the remainder of this discussion the term creole will be used in the sense just suggested. The effect of this upon our typology is that the feature 'vitality' is no longer needed. As Figure 4 shows, a creole is defined by the presence of the attributes 'language' and 'creolized'.

Foreigner talk is distinguished from 'broken' X by the presence of 'creolization' in the former and its absence in the latter. Creoles and foreigner talk are both plus 'creolization'. The former is a language, however, while the latter is not. Post-creole continua are minus pidginization and minus creolization. Since all four types are plus 'natural' and minus 'historicity' this information is not included in the table.

Figure 4.

Attribute			
Language	Pidginized	Creolized	Type
+	-	+	Creole
-	-	-	Post-creole
-	+	-	"Broken" X
-	-	+	Foreigner talk

3. The Origin of Creoles

Having established a set of criteria whereby creoles, post-creoles, 'broken' X and foreigner talk may be distinguished from one another we may use the term creole speech community whenever one of them is a prominent feature of the language situation. Such speech communities may be arranged along a sociolinguistic continuum representing various stages in a process beginning with the spread of X as a second language and terminating in an X-based creole or a post-creole variety of X. The problem of the origin of any particular creole may be conceptualized within such a framework on the assumption that if an X-based creole is a feature of a language situation at some particular time (T), then at some earlier time (T-1), in the same community, there should be a contact situation involving the spread of X as a second language among speakers of one or more different unrelated mother tongues. If the creole in question has native speakers there might be an intermediate stage between T and T-1 in which the creole had no native speakers and functioned as a lingua franca among speakers of various mother tongues later replaced by the creole. It should be noted, however, that in either case, the problem of accounting for the emergence of a new X-based language is the same. In both instances, the problem is to account for the transition from the original contact situation, in which the creole does not exist, to a subsequent stage in which it does exist, either in the function of a lingua franca or as the mother tongue of some group.

Creolists are far from agreement as to how the transition from a contact situation to a creole occurs beyond the very general consensus that as the initial stage there must be a mechanism for converting normal X into 'broken' X on a large scale (i.e., for X to be pidginized). The problem of how pidginized X becomes creolized has produced various proposals. Bloomfield (1933) accounts for the transition by blocking access to normal X for speakers of 'broken' X by means of the invariable use of foreigner talk by native speakers of X when they address non-native speakers. Hall (1966) who shares this view claimed that "The aboriginal, not knowing any better, would assume that this (foreigner talk) was the white man's real language, and would delight in using it." Whinnom (1971) also accounts for the transition to a creole by blocking access to normal X. The mechanism he choses, however, is removal of the incipient speakers of X from any contact with native speakers of X. If all the incipient speakers spoke the same mother tongue they would have no use for X once contact with native speakers was ended. If they spoke several different mother tongues, however, they might continue to use X as a lingua franca.

In the absence of native speakers to provide models of correct usage, the variety of X spoken by incipient bilinguals (Diebold 1961) could become the norm transmitted to new speakers and could result in abrupt termination of the continuum which previously linked pidginized X to normal X as speakers of X as a second language acquired increasing degrees of proficiency.

Whinnom's hypothesis that "no simple bilingual situation ever gives rise to a pidgin (i.e., creole)" is supported by the fact that Papiamentu emerged from a multilingual contact situation during the ear of the slave trade in Curaçao and by the fact that during the earlier era of Spanish rule the spread of Spanish among the Curaçao Indians, who spoke a single mother tongue, did not result in Spanish being pidginized or creolized, but only in the use of normal Spanish by the Indians (Hartog 1968). During the era of the slave trade however, we have evidence of the pidginization of Spanish in the report of a Jesuit priest who visited Curaçao in 1704 and claimed that the slaves made use of 'broken' Spanish (Hartog 1968). This 'broken' Spanish apparently provided input to the process of creolization which resulted in Papiamentu. The mechanism which brought it about was apparenlty the frequent necessity for the African slaves, of linguistically diverse backgrounds, to communicate among themselves in Spanish in the absence of native speaker models.

The Portuguese element in Papiamentu may be accounted for by positing the existence, within the linguistic repertoire of the Curaçao slaves, of a Portuguese-based créole related to the creoles spoken in Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and the Gulf of Guinea today. It could also be accounted for by the fact that Portuguese was the mother tongue of the Sephardic Jews of Curaçao, but numerous parallels between Papiamentu and the West African creoles are difficult to account for solely on this basis of contact. I do not wish to suggest that a Portuguese-based creole relexified into Papiamentu, however, but only to suggest that the two languages coexisted with one another for a period of time sufficient for the former to influence the structure of the latter before being replaced by it.

4. Conclusion

The situations in which known creoles seem to have come into being may be summarized for purposes of comparison within a typology of creole speech communities. By summarizing and comparing such data with hypothetical situations such as Bloomfield's 'talking down' model and Whinnom's linguistic hybridization theory, it should be possible to develop a model of the origin of creoles based upon a solid body of empirical observations which enables us to formulate hypotheses and correctly estimate the probability of the emergence of new languages under different sets of circumstances. Adequate information already exists for a number of languages and only needs to be pulled together within a common framework. As we await the results of future research within such a framework, we might venture a few generalizations of a very tentative nature based upon the results of the present study and other well known facts.

The first generalization which we might venture with a reasonable degree of confidence is that most, if not all, simple bilateral contact situations do not result in new languages. If the group into which X is spreading is an immigrant group such as the Cocoliche speakers in Argentina, or the Australian factory

workers, the probability of a new language is nil; even if the host group uses foreigner talk, and even if they speak several different mother tongues. The only kind of bilateral situation that seems to have any likelihood at all of producing a new language is the kind of situation found in Viet Nam under the French where such factors as the relatively small numbers of the dominant group, together with pronounced racial, cultural and linguistic differences, and the use of foreigner talk, drastically minimize the chances for more than a tiny minority of the host population to surpass the 'broken' French level of proficiency. The pidginized French which resulted from such conditions in Viet Nam, however, is a much more likely outcome of a bilateral contact situation than a new French-based creole. Even when the community into which X is spreading consists of several different mother tongue groups, the result may not be a new language. The spread of Portuguese among a multilingual national community in the former Portuguese colony of Angola has not resulted in any significant degree of creolization. English, under similar conditions in Ghana has not produced any English-based creole.

In those rare instances in which new languages spread throughout entire communities, a main prerequisite appears to be the existence of new communities, the members of which are drawn from several different communities each of which had previously been in contact with speakers of some common language X. Under such conditions, X is a very likely candidate for adoption by the new community as a lingua franca. If the performance of a language adopted as a lingua franca is characteristically 'broken', chances for the emergence of a new X-based creole should be optimal.

New communities were created in the past by the institution of slavery and apparently gave impetus to the rise of existing European-based creoles in West Africa and the New World. More recently, in two different locations in Africa, new communities appear to have been created around the mining industry. Fanangalo, or Kitchen Kaffir, for example, according to Hancock (1971) is "a pidginized Zulu employed by migrant African mine workers around Johannesburg." In the former Belgian Congo, the development of the Union Minière de Haute Katanga involved the recruitment of a multilingual labor force and was a key factor in the spread of a pidginized variety of Swahili in the Katanga mining district (Polomé 1971). Hancock (1971) also reports that "A pidgin Hausa, called Barikanci, grew up around the European barracks in northern Nigeria and was used as a lingua franca in the armed forces, sometimes taught by English-speakers to speakers of diverse Nigerian languages."

It should be possible to add greatly to our knowledge of how creoles come into being by studying the language situations in new communities which might be found in various parts of the world today and those which might be reconstructed from knowledge of events and circumstances which preceded the emergence of existing creoles. Such situations would be expected to lie at some point along a continuum between two poles. At one extreme there are

incipient speakers of X as a second language who use it as a lingua franca, but no speakers of any new language based on X. At the other pole, the new X-based language has replaced the original substrate languages and eliminated the need for a lingua franca once filled by X. The old European-based languages like Papiamentu, Krio, Nigerian and Haitian Creole lie at the latter end of the continuum, and provide no direct evidence of how such languages develop. In many areas of Africa, however, and other parts of the world where multilingualism is rife and forces of nationalism, urbanization and modernization are giving impetus to increased communication across linguistic lines, it should be possible to find new multilingual communities at various points along the continuum. By studying such communities first-hand it should be possible to document the process whereby new X-based languages come into being and spread.

Footnote

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